

# Great Ape Conservation Fund

Apes, by their nature, are extremely vulnerable. They occur at very low densities, grow relatively slowly, are long-lived, have low reproductive rates and complex social relationships. Today, all the world's great ape species are threatened with extinction.

In Asia, both orangutans and gibbons are facing a multitude of serious threats. Asia's only great ape species, the orangutan — found on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra — will be pushed to extinction if illegal logging, forest fires, poorly planned road construction, conversion of indigenous forests to plantations, draining of peat lands, and poaching continue unchecked. Stopping habitat loss and protecting remaining forests are essential to save this unique species.

Asia's lesser apes, the gibbons, are threatened by habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation, and hunting for food, medicine, and sport. This situation is made worse by the lack of effective sanctuaries for gibbons. Existing protected areas suffer from inadequate management, and poor enforcement of wildlife laws.

Africa's apes — gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos — are also facing an arsenal of assaults ranging from hunting to natural habitat loss, and illegal pet trade to disease outbreaks. These threats have combined to rapidly decimate populations. In 1960, more than one million chimpanzees populated the dense forests of Africa. Today, fewer than 200,000 survive in the wild and their numbers continue to fall.

Throughout West and Central Africa, gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos are being hunted for food. The situation has been heightened as roads built for logging and mining operations have

allowed poachers access to previously remote forests, which once served as protective refuges for apes. In villages where meat from domesticated animals is scarce and expensive, wild animals are hunted as a cheap and locally available source of protein. In cities, eating bushmeat has become a status symbol for the wealthy and the demand for wild meat has steadily increased.

Additionally, in the past few years, scientists documented a new and devastating threat to great apes — disease. Recent outbreaks of hemorrhagic fevers, like Ebola, have reduced some ape populations to a fraction of their previous numbers, killing up to 90% of individuals in affected populations.

Apes are susceptible to many of the same diseases as humans. As growing

human populations penetrate further into ape habitat, the potential for disease transmission between apes and people, and vice versa, is increasing. As a result, the bushmeat trade poses a serious health risk for humans.

In response to these many pressing threats, the U.S. Congress passed the Great Ape Conservation Act in 2000 which created the Great Ape Conservation Fund for conservation of gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos, orangutans and gibbons. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service awards grants from the fund for activities and research related to infectious diseases, strengthening law enforcement, conservation education, safeguarding habitat and much more. With the help of this Act and many committed conservationists, there is hope that these animals will beat the odds of extinction.



*Mountain gorilla youngster*  
USFWS/Richard Ruggiero

*The Fiscal Year 2006 Congressional appropriation of \$1.3 Million to the Great Apes Conservation Fund, was augmented by \$2.5 Million from USAID's Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE). These additional funds complement other CARPE activities and support ape conservation in six Central African countries. Together with the 2006 appropriation, these resources allowed the Service to leverage \$4.7 Million in matching and in-kind funds to support 58 projects in Asia and Africa, including the following vital efforts:*

- Supporting Orangutan Protection and Habitat Monitoring Unit patrols charged with stopping the killing and capture of orangutans and destruction of their habitat in the grounds and buffer zone of Gunung Palung National Park in Indonesia.
- Strengthening conservation within the newly created Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary in India by studying the gibbon population numbers and structure, constructing an anti-poaching camp, preparing and distributing a local language leaflet on the importance of conserving the area, and preparing a conservation and management action plan.
- Coordinating efforts of great ape disease researchers by linking field scientists in Africa with international experts and laboratories. This project continues an on-going effort to determine the impact of Ebola on ape populations and to develop effective strategies for dealing with the disease.
- Employing innovative technology to protect apes by the development and testing of networked detection sensors to immediately alert park authorities when poachers invade protected areas in the Republic of Congo.
- Conducting species surveys of isolated, previously unstudied and potentially important areas of suitable habitat in the Democratic Republic of Congo where chimpanzees are believed to exist.
- Creating an integrated system, using information gathered through ranger-based monitoring, to gain consensus among experts from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda on how to best conserve and manage mountain gorillas in the Albertine Rift region.
- Supporting the development of the curriculum, faculty, and infrastructure of the Djolu Technical College, a local institution in the Democratic Republic of Congo that trains Congolese conservationists, thereby benefiting bonobos through increased in-country capacity for ape conservation.
- Supporting conservation education for Ugandan students through lectures, educational media, and field visits to important protected areas containing chimpanzees.

Great Ape Conservation Funding History from 2001 through 2006	
Total Number of Grant Proposals Received	354
Total Number of Grants Awarded	213
Percentage of Countries with Great Apes that Receive Grants	84%
Total Amount Appropriated by U.S. Congress	\$7,004,584*
Total Funds Distributed through Grants	\$9,847,207
Total Funds to Administration of Grants	\$480,000
Total Matching/In-kind Funds Leveraged by Grants	\$12,358,588

\*Amount appropriated does not include FY06 \$2.5 million grant from USAID for Congo Basin GA Assistance



**Orangutan**

Georgeanne Irvine/Orangutan Foundation International



**Hainan gibbon**

XiZhinong/Fauna & Flora International

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